

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY TUNIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 175967

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, EAID, PFOR, TS, XF

SUBJECT: TUNISIAN AMBASSADOR'S CALL ON ASSISTANT

SECRETARY NEWSOM

1. TUNISIAN AMBASSADOR EL GOULLI CALLED ON NEWSOM AUGUST 31 TO REVIEW MILITARY AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE ISSUES AND TO PRESENT GOT VIEWS ON ELECTION PLATFORM OF ISRAELI LABOR PARTY.

2. EL GOULLI LED OFF WITH A REFERENCE TO GOT REQUEST FOR A REVIEW OF THE 15 YEAR OLD AGREEMENT COVERING US ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS IN TUNISIA. THIS MIGHT BE ACCOMPLISHED BY SENDING A MIXED COMMISSION TO TUNIS FOR TALKS. NEWSOM SAID THAT WE WOULD TREAT THIS PROPOSAL SERIOUSLY, AS WE DO ALL PROPOSALS OF THE GOT, BUT OUR PRELIMINARY VIEW IS
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NEGATIVE. WE DO NOT NORMALLY USE THIS TECHNIQUE, AND WITH

RESPECT TO TUNISIA WE RELY ON OUR AMBASSADOR AND USAID DIRECTOR. NEWSOM EXPRESSED HOPE THAT EL GOULLI WOULD CONVEY TO GOT REALITIES OF WASHINGTON SCENE WHICH PRECLUDE LONG TERM AID COMMITMENTS. THIS IS NOT A TIME FOR DRAMATIZING OUR OVERALL RELATIONSHIP AND MAKING PROJECTIONS FOR THE FUTURE. MOREOVER, SAID NEWSOM, HE HOPED THAT RESULTS OF HIS VISIT TO TUNISIA IN APRIL HAD DISPELLED ANY DOUBTS AS TO USG INTENTIONS.

3. TURNING TO MILITARY ASSISTANCE, EL GOULLI EXPRESSED GRATITUDE FOR POSITIVE RESPONSE IN NAVAL SPHERE, AS REPRESENTED BY TRANSFER OF DER, AND FOR OFFER TO SELL SKYHAWK SQUADRON. EL GOULLI ASKED FOR ADDITIONAL AID IN FORM OF PT BOATS TO HELP TUNISIA GUARD LONG COASTLINE. HIS DEMARCHE WAS IN SUPPORT OF LETTER FROM MINISTER OF DEFENSE TO SECRETARY OF STATE (POUCHED TO TUNIS) SENT ON INSTRUCTIONS OF PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA. NEWSOM SAID WE WERE PLEASED THAT SALE OF DER WAS POSSIBLE. HE REVIEWED SCHEDULE FOR REFITTING, TRAINING OF TUNISIAN PERSONNEL AND TRANSFER OF DER. WITH RESPECT TO SKYHAWKS. NEWSOM CAUTIONED THAT WE ARE NOT IN A POSITION TO DISCUSS TERMS SINCE THERE IS STILL NO LEGISLATION FOR MILITARY GRANTS OR CREDITS. FIRST STEP WILL BE VISIT OF US TECHNICAL TEAM TO TUNIS WHERE RESULTS OF TALKS AT WORKING LEVEL WILL DETERMINE COST OF TOTAL PACKAGE.

4. PT BOATS, SAID NEWSOM, ARE NOT IN SURPLUS FOR USG AND ARE UNLIKELY TO BECOME AVAILABLE. IF GOT FEELS NEED ACQUIRE SUCH VESSELS WE WOULD ENCOURAGE IT LOOK TO TRADITIONAL SUPPLIERS SUCH AS FRANCE. ALTERNATIVE IS PURCHASE OF NEW VESSELS IN US AT COMMERCIAL TERMS. THIS WOULD BE VERY EXPENSIVE. ESPECIALLY IF USG HELPS WITH PURCHASE OF SKYHAWKS THERE WOULD BE NO AVAILABLE FINANCIAL AID. EL GOULLI NOTED THAT HE WAS SEEKING APPOINTMENT WITH SECRETARY OF DEFENSE AND HAD INSTRUCTIONS REQUEST PT BOATS. NEWSOM SUGGESTED THAT HE AVOID ASKING FOR THIS SPECIFIC TYPE OF VESSEL, SINCE OTHER TYPES MIGHT FILL BILL.

5. EL GOULLI NOTED PENDING REQUESTS OF GOT FOR ASSISTANCE IN FIELDS OF MEDICAL RESEARCH AND RADIO BROADCASTING.
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MORE SPECIFIC DETAILS HAD BEEN RECENTLY SUPPLIED TO DEPARTMENT. (MEMORANDA FROM TUNISIAN EMBASSY SENT TO TUNIS BY POUCH.) WHAT IS DESIRED FOR DEVELOPMENT OF MEDICAL FACULTY AT SFAX IS LABORATORIES FOR RESEARCH ON PSYCHIATRIC AND INTESTINAL DISORDERS. DEPTOFF PRESENT AT MEETING MENTIONED THAT COUNSELOR OF EMBASSY GHEZAL WOULD MEET SOON WITH OFFICIALS OF SCI, INCLUDING USPHS DOCTOR, TO REVIEW THIS QUESTION. WITH RESPECT TO BROADCASTING,

NEWSOM CITED LACK OF CONGRESSIONAL SYMPATHY FOR ASSISTANCE IN THIS FIELD. WE HAVE SENT TUNISIAN SUPPLIED SPECIFICATIONS TO VOA AND ARE HOPEFUL THAT VOA EXPERTS CAN SUGGEST MEANS OF IMPROVING TUNISIAN BROADCAST SIGNALS BY BETTER USE OF EXISTING FACILITIES.

6. EL GOULLI RAISED MATTER OF EMBARGO ON VEGETABLE OIL SHIPMENTS. NEWSOM EXPRESSED REGRET THAT WE HAD BEEN UNABLE OBTAIN EXCEPTION FOR TUNISIA. THERE WERE SOME WHO BELIEVED THAT VEGOIL WOULD BE AVAILABLE FOR TUNISIA BEGINNING WITH SECOND QUARTER OF FISCAL YEAR. THIS REMAINED TO BE SEEN, AS DID QUESTION OF WHETHER AMOUNT ADDITIONAL TO 30,000 TONS IN PRESENT AGREEMENT WOULD BE AVAILABLE THIS FISCAL YEAR. NEWSOM SAID HE COULD STATE WITH ASSURANCE THAT WHEAT WOULD NOT BE AVAILABLE FOR TUNISIA, AND EL GOULLI ACKNOWLEDGED THAT HE WAS ALREADY AWARE OF THIS.

7. AS FINAL POINT, EL GOULLI SAID THAT GOT VERY CONCERNED ABOUT IMPLICATIONS OF ISRAELI LABOR PARTY POLICY TOWARD OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND HOPES THAT USG WILL OBJECT TO HARD LINE WHICH GOI APPEARS TO BE ADOPTING. ALTHOUGH TUNISIA NOT DIRECTLY INVOLVED, IT SHARES FEELINGS OF OTHER ARABS AND CONSIDERS THAT PERMISSION FOR ISRAELIS TO BUY PROPERTY IN OCCUPIED AREAS WOULD BE VIOLATION OF GENEVA CONVENTION. NEWSOM STATED THAT USG HAS EXPRESSED OPPOSITION TO CHANGES IN STATUS OF OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND THAT TUNISIAN VIEWS WOULD BE MADE KNOWN TO NEA. RUSH

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